Problems faced by tea gardens in West Bengal

2984. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the problems faced by the tea gardens in northern part of West Bengal; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken to address the problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) The tea industry in the northern part of West Bengal is facing problems due to unremunerative price of tea in recent years. The problems of the industry has been compounded by increasing cost of production, sluggish growth in the rate of domestic demand and fall in exports. The industry is also beset with problems like old age of the plantations, worn out machinery in the processing factories and poor infrastructure facilities.

(b) The Government has taken various steps to revive the tea industry in the country including in West Bengal. These include withdrawal of the additional duty of excise of Re. 1 per kg on the tea in the Union Budget for 2005-06. Further the Government has sanctioned two schemes in June 2005 *i.e.* subsidy for production of orthodox teas and assistance to the two tea research & Development Institutions for financing from the special fund created with collections of additional duty of excise on tea.

In order to maintain quality and retain the brand equity of Indian teas, the Government has issued a new Tea (Distribution and Export) Control Order, 2005 under the provisions of the Tea Act, 1953 on 01.04.2005 in supersession of the Tea (Distribution and Export) Control Order, 1957.

The new Order prescribes strict norms for tea and stipulates that all teas, whether imported or exported, would be required to conform to the specifications cited in the new Order. The tea Board is also implementing a price sharing formula between the small tea growers and manufacturers of tea with effect from 1 st April 2004 in order to ensure that the small tea growers get a reasonable share of the price obtained by the manufacturer for made tea. A Special Tea Loan (STTL) for the tea sector was announced which envisages restructuring/rephasing of irregular portion of outstanding term/working capital loan in the tea sector with repayment over 5 to 7

years and a moratorium of 1 year to small tea growers and bought leaf factories, which is extended on a case to case basis for large tea growers. The STTL also provides for working capital upto Rs. 2 lakhs at a rate not exceeding 9% to small growers. Import duty on cetain items of machinery used to improve productivity and quality of tea, including value addition, has been reduced to an all inclusive rate of 5%. The Tea Board also provides subsidy for replantation and rejuvenation of old tea bushes and for quality upgradation of factories. The Government is also working out a special financial package for tea industry with special emphasis on replantation and rejuvenation of old tea bushes.

Claim of patenting Baingan by American firm

2985. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report in the media to the effect that an American firm has laid claim to patenting Baingan as a Hi Bush Eggplant by hybridizing it with Indian Crop;

(b) if so, whether Government have considered the question of challenging this ; and if so, the decision taken in the matter; and

(c) the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Applicability of the Patent law being restricted to the patent granting country, patents granted out of India have no applicability in India. Patent being a private right is contested and defended by affected parties in accordance with the patent law of the country concerned.

Grants to Uttar Pradesh under ASIDE

† 2986. SHRI BHAGWATI SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that less grant has been given to Uttar Pradesh as compared to other States under ASIDE Scheme in the year 2004-05;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.